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ABSTRACT

This case study examined the effects of unemployment upon an unskilled 31-year-old male client who had been laid off his job as an assembly line automobile worker after 13 years. Instead of searching for employment the client was sleeping late, watching television, and spending time at a local tavern. The general hypothesis tested was that the client's avoidance behavior was correlated with his feelings of fatigue, possible incompetence, and insecurity. Clinical assessment tasks included introspective self-reports, completion of data charts, evaluation of records, role playing, and clinical observations. A behavioral contract was made in which the client attended a job interview and completed an application. The results indicated a marked difference between behavior patterns before clinical intervention and after in the manner in which the client viewed himself as well as his behavior patterns in seeking his goals. Each day the client looked for a job by logging the date, amount of time spent in searching, and the number of jobs applied for during the week. After a designated period of time set by the contract the client should progress to the next stage of retraining. (ABL)

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THE SCENARIO OF AN UNEMPLOYED AUTO. WORKER

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The Scenario Of An Unemployed Auto. Worker

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This study examines the effects of unemployment upon an unskilled individual. The general hypothesis tested was that the client's avoidance behavior was correlated with his feelings of fatique, possible incompetence, and insecurity. Clinical assessment tasks included introspective self-reports, completion of data charts, evaluation of records, roleplaying, and clinical observations. The results indicate a marked difference between behavior patterns before clinical intervention and after in the manner the client viewed himself as well as his behavior patterns in seeking his goals.

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THE SCENARIO OF AN UNEMPLOYED AUTO. WORKER

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INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PROBLEM:

Mark is thirty-one years old and comes to counseling because he has been laid off from his job at GM after working on the line for thirteen years. He got the job right after high school and held the same type of work during those years. The company has phased out this part of their operation and has allocated severance pay for employees for further training or help in job placement, but he has not been able to find the intiative to start doing anything else. Instead he sleeps in late, watches television, and spends several evenings a week at the local tavern. He has a wife and several young children and the family is living on his wife's work as a waitress and his unemployment compensation. He says that he wants to find another type of work but cannot seem to motivate himself to start looking. Another problem in the situation is that work for the type of line assembly work that he has been doing has been phased out of the industry.

HYPOTHESIS:

It is hypothesized that the client's avoidance behavior can be correlated with his feelings of fatique, possible incompetence, and insecurity.

ASSESSMENT:

A functional analysis of the client's new situation should identify antecedents and consequences which lead to the current described behavior patterns. "It's important not to misperceive the individual behavior, environment, cognitives, and physical events related to it." [1]

In this case, Mike, the client had been working for thirteen consecutive years without a break in employment. His new behavior patterns resulted from a drastic change in his work situation. Evidence indicates that finances are not an issue at the current time since unemployment compensation and his wife's wages are sufficient to live on.[2]

Therefore, it seems that Mike had resolved to relax for some period of time after the onset of unemployment. One can

[1]Eileen Gambrill, "Framework for Assessment", Behavior Modification: Handbook of Assessment, Intervention, and Evaluation. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977), pp.100-101.

[2]Dennis Bagarozzi. "Applied Behavioral Intervention In Research Design, Implementation, and Evaluation", Clinical Social Work Journal (1984), Vol. 12 (1), p. 45.

conclude, his behavior resulted from emotional fatique due to sudden unemployment and a new ambivalent situation. Although, Mike has not begun to seek employment or further education, he had enough motivation strength to come to counseling to seek help. He realizes that he has not been able to solve his problems up to now.[3]

Another area of contention is that Mike's job classification has been scheduled to be phased out of the industry completely. Other new information would come directly from Mike's self-report during the initial therapy sessions.

Therefore, effective assessment goals are to identify antecedents and facilitate desirable behaviors, and identify those related to undesirable reactions.[4] Mike's emotional reaction of procastination may vary well be the undesirable reaction to antecedents of unemployment.

His confidence level may also be effected by the prior event. Mike has not attended school or looked for work in the recent past. So each behavioral response is part of a chain which ultimately resulted from his unemployment. Affective emotional components including anxiety may be a consequence of behavior which matches the magnitude of the eliciting event.[5]

[3]Eileen Gambrill. "Framework for Assessment", Behavior Modification: Handbook of Assessment, Intervention, and Evaluation. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987), p. 96-98.

[4]Ibid., p. 104.

[5]Gambrill, op. cit., p. 114.

Some sources of assessment information derived from the context of the interview session are questionnaire completion by the client, self-report statements, therapist's observations, archival reports (attendance records from work, school grades, arrest records), and reports of significant others used in making evaluations.[6]

In a similar manner, behavioral deficits and needed skills can be discovered in sessions. During assessment behavioral components that have been dormant in the clients repertoire may be found to require incentives and prompts to generate a new chain of positive behavior patterns. Such as Mike's seeking work or attending school.

Roleplaying is a technique that is valuable in both assessment and intervention. Often a brief period of roleplaying is enough to determine the client's skill level. Mike's communication skills may be assessed through it.

Conversely, roleplaying provides intervention and competence training for future job interviews. He can learn new methods through modeling the therapist's performance. At the same time, the therapist provides immediate feedback and positive reinforcement for appropriate responses and improvement strategies.[7]

The technique can be used to discover irrational expectations that the client harbors which may be blocking appropriate

[6]Eileen Gambrill. "Framework for Assessment", Behavior Modification: Handbook of Assessment, Intervention, and Evaluation.

[7]John Shelton and Rona Levy. "Enhancing Compliance with Behavioral Assignments", Behavioral Assignments and Treatment Compliance: A Handbook of Clinical Strategies.(Champaign Research Press, 1981), p.44.

progressive behavior. Therefore, Mike may be restricting himself through his own belief systems. His "internal dialog" regarding himself, may lack tolerance and confidence, causing insecurities.

INTERVENTION AND CONCLUSION:

"A goal of intervention is to train the client to be a more accurate observer of his own reactions and to related factors."[8] Behavioral contracts created through negotiation by the therapist and the client start the interventions side of treatment.

Behavioral contracts emphasize the positive continencies for achieving compliance with assigned behavioral tasks. They give directions, clarify, and help to the client to complete assignments.[9] All tasks in the contract should be worked upon, rehearsed in sessions before they are assigned as homework to the client.[10] Mike's assignment of attending a job interview and completing an application are examples. This reduces the contingencies of anxiety for the client.

Belief systems that are destructive can be put into clear focus during intervention. Fighting damaging thoughts by stubbornly refusing to accept self-abuse will cause the upset

[8]Eileen Gambrill. "Framework for Assessment", Behavior Modification: Handbook of Assessment, Intervention, and Evaluation. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass; 1977), pp. 116-117.

[9]John Shelton and Rona Levy. "Enhancing Compliance with Behavioral Assignments", Behavioral Assignments and Treatment Compliance: A Handbook of Clinical Strategies.(Champaign Research Press, 1981), p. 47.

[10]Ibid., p. 47.

situation to pass.[11] Mike refusing to watch so much television, substituted by desirable activity of looking for work. The client adopts a new perspective for change by challenging self-defeating thoughts.[12] Positive reinforcement provided by the therapist, the client, and significant others helps.

Mike, each day works at his assignment of looking for a job by loging the date, amount of time spent in searching, and number of jobs applied for during the week, thereby, he self-monitors his work. He should be encouraged to ask questions as they arise in the sessions as well as ask for help from significant others.

After a designated period of time set by the contract, the client should progress to the next stage of retraining. Consequently, new assessment tests and new contract goals should be established. The cycle of therapy renegotiated again, yet, with confidence that he tried his best to find work.

[11] David Burns. Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy. (New York, 1980), p.272.

[12] Ibid., p. 273

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